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Bedding Too Close to Baseboard Heater Cause of Palmer Fatal Fire

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan and Palmer Fire Chief Alan J. Roy said the most probable cause of the November 13, 2008 fatal fire at 25-31 Commercial Street was combustibles coming contact with the electric baseboard heater. The fire tragically took the life a woman who lived at 29 Commercial Street in the early morning hours. All other residents of the 4-unit apartment building escaped to safety.

Chief Roy said, "Investigators believe that the blanket came in contact with the electric baseboard heater and that is how the fire started" He added, "Tragically, this is the second fire deaths we have had in Palmer this year and I want to extend our deepest sympathies to the family for their loss."

State Fire Marshal Coan said, "Heating is the second leading cause of fires in Massachusetts' homes which is why the Department of Fire Services has launched its *KeepWarmKeepSafe* campaign this winter. The website www.mass.gov/keepwarmkeepsafe has a lot of good safety tips including the fact that it is important to keep things that can burn – like bedding, furniture, newspapers – three feet away from all heating appliances. "

Chief Roy said, "There is no evidence that there were working smoke alarms in the apartment, but the destruction was such that we cannot know for certain. I would like though to take this opportunity to remind everyone to make sure their smoke alarms are working and if you can't remember the last time you changed the batteries in them, please give them a fresh one for the winter." He added, "Smoke alarms are your first line of defense in a fire and can give you something you don't have in a fire – time."

The fire was jointly investigated by the Palmer Fire Department, Palmer Police Department and State Police assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal. State Police assigned to the Hampden District Attorney's Office and Code Compliance Officers from the Office of the State Fire Marshal also assisted.

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